



## ORANGE COUNTY INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT CENTER

P.O. Box 1755, Santa Ana, CA 92702-1755 · (714) 628-3024 · FAX (714) 628-3001 · [ociac@ociac.org](mailto:ociac@ociac.org)

### INFORMATION BULLETIN

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## Potential Violent Protest Tactics and Techniques

### SCOPE

The purpose of this information bulletin is to assist local law enforcement in the planning and response to violent protest tactics/issues, to protect the rights of persons to lawfully assemble, to preserve the peace, and to effectively deploy public safety personnel. The following information is intended to assist law enforcement with facilitating event-related activities, and assist in public safety response by addressing past, present, and/or anticipated unlawful conduct.



"Black Bloc"

Although the majority of groups and activists engage in legal activity protected by the First Amendment, a small group of individuals may subscribe to violence, including extremists, anarchists, gangs, and other opportunists. Individuals may use lawful demonstrations to infiltrate legitimate demonstrations as cover to engage in criminal activity to disrupt the event, using extreme tactics to provoke law enforcement and attract media attention.



Trash Bins May Be Used to Block Streets

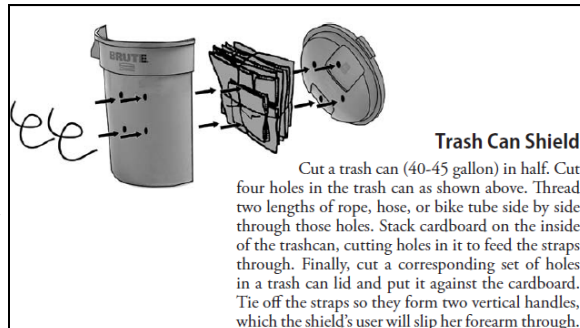
Extremists can be technologically savvy, well organized, and have conducted hands-on training, such as field tactics, street blockades, urban climbing, and using the media to their advantage. They will have researched local laws, ordinances and property lines. They will also deploy "legal observers", who will liaison with law enforcement and videotape incidents, and extremists will often have their attorney's phone number written on their arm. Strong organizations may attract additional individuals from various areas to support their cause.

### DIRECT ACTION TACTICS

Many extremists employ "Black Bloc" tactics, wearing black clothing for visibility, to show solidarity, and to provide anonymity. Black Bloc is not a standing organization, but rather, it is a tactic in which activists dress completely in black to conceal their individual identity and commit direct action. If criminal behavior occurs, it is important to obtain photographs of these individuals with and without their masks for identification in order to pursue criminal prosecution. Bandanas or other color codes are often used to identify groups, positions or areas of responsibility, and they often dress in layers so they can strip off their clothing after they commit their crimes.

**Scouting:** Reconnaissance techniques to exploit target vulnerabilities and to locate weaknesses in the law enforcement deployment. They will also test law enforcement response to incidents in an effort to locate areas to breach the perimeter or create other diversion tactics to deplete first responder services. They communicate very effectively, using the Internet, social networking, and text messaging; however, since they are aware law enforcement may use wiretaps and subpoena electronic information post-incident, they also use more primitive means such as runners, hand signals, voice commands or sounds during direct actions.

**Shields:** Vehicles, garbage cans, barrels, inner tubes, foam, plexiglass, traffic signs, hard foam core wrapped with fiberglass and modified backpacks are used to defend against law enforcement, and large banners are used to conceal their actions as they approach skirmish lines or commit crimes.



**Body Armor:** May include eye protection, gas masks, multiple layers of clothing, newspaper, foam padding, athletic gear, such as shin guards, football pads, chest protectors and skateboard pads, as well the use of pain medication prior to the attack.

**Obstruct Ingress/Egress Routes:** Blocking entrances and exits may be used to prevent access by public safety. Trash bins and other heavy equipment can be used to impede public safety response. Also, individuals may use Sleeping Dragons (locking arms inside PVC/metal tubes requiring Urban Search & Rescue extrication), and may use bicycle D-locks to secure doors by their necks, or chain themselves to large delivery vehicles/busses.

**Improvised Weapons:** Bottles, hammers, knives, scissors, screwdrivers, screws, pipes, bricks, wood, sticks, rocks, pens/pencils, traffic equipment, etc. Individuals may target law enforcement officers' eyes, throat, nose, groin and knees using the following improvised weapons. Law enforcement should conduct an extensive sweep of the protest site and surrounding area prior to the event to remove or secure potential or hidden weapons, and to identify possible staging areas, attack locations and escape routes that may be marked with paint or chalk. The area should also be videotaped and photographed before and after the event to document damage caused by the extremists.

In addition, the following improvised weapons may include:

- Molotov cocktails
- Pyrotechnics/M-80s glued with ball bearings or other projectiles
- Tiki Torches, which are broomsticks with coffee cans filled with gas covered rags that can be ignited and thrown at officers
- Acid filled eggs
- Spray bottles / Super Soakers / balloons / bags filled with urine, gas, bleach, ammonia, chlorine or feces
- Slingshots using ball bearings, mud balls, rocks, etc
- Paintballs to mark targets and undercover officers



They may also have wire cutters to remove flex cuffs, and have been known to have counterfeit identification / credentials, or legitimate credentials provided by associates.

Crowds and criminal acts committed by participants within the crowd require a flexible response. Much like Mobile Field Force (MFF) techniques, groups may use the following formations to attack skirmish lines:

- **Tortoise:** Multiple rows of shields deployed at the ground and shoulder levels, as well as over the top, designed to defend against projectiles, such as tear gas, pepper balls or less lethal
- **Square:** Set to face around a point with shields out. Ideal for defending a fixed position with a small number of people (can be used to block a path of people or vehicles through key access points at an event)
- **Wedge:** Similar to the MFF wedge, usually 7-11 across and 4 deep
- **Pulse charge:** Series of quick engagements to confuse law enforcement and surprise officers with the real push. Usually three pulses before the main breach attempt
- **Echelon charge:** Designed to turn the flank of a MFF line to allow protestors to escape. May link arms to strengthen the formation and make arrests more difficult. Linebackers will deal with barriers, etc

## RESPONSE & CONSIDERATIONS

While demonstrations can happen without warning, most large events will usually be preceded by some type of call to action which can provide law enforcement with some degree of advance notice. This information can assist law enforcement in determining which groups may be participating, the number of demonstrators that can be expected, and what demonstration tactics the groups have used in the past.



When confronting violent offenders during lawful gatherings, audio and video recording is imperative. As soon as officers locate and identify their staging area, the liaison officer should attempt to contact their leaders as soon as possible, and all attempts should be made to photograph and videotape them before, during and after they are masked. Dispersal orders should be given as soon as it becomes appropriate.

Crowd management, intervention, and control strategies and tactical considerations may include:

- Establishing contact with the crowd
- Gaining verbal compliance
- Supporting and facilitating First Amendment activities
- Developing a traffic management and/or control plan
- Using crowd control and dispersal methods
- Protecting critical facilities
- Providing a high-visibility law enforcement presence

For additional information on crowd management situations, visit:

### **California Peace Officers and Standards (POST) Commission**

Crowd Management, Intervention, and Control - March 2012

<http://lib.post.ca.gov/Publications/CrowdMgtGuidelines.pdf>

### **U.S. Department of Justice**

Law Enforcement Guidelines for First Amendment-Protected Events, Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative - October, 2011

[http://it.ojp.gov/documents/First\\_Amendment\\_Guidance.pdf](http://it.ojp.gov/documents/First_Amendment_Guidance.pdf)

*OCIAC recognizes that Americans have constitutionally protected rights to assemble, speak, and petition the government.*

*OCIAC safeguards these rights and only reports on first amendment protected activities for operational planning in the interest of assuring the safety and security of the demonstrators and the public.*